

REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated April 20, 2004. Claims 1-8 were pending, with claim 1 being in independent form. Claim 9 was previously canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer. By this Amendment, Applicant has canceled claim 7, without prejudice or disclaimer, amended independent claim 1 to include the features of claim 7 (now canceled), and amended claim 8 to depend from claim 1. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter is introduced by the claim amendments. Accordingly, claims 1-6 and 8 are now pending.

Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as purportedly unpatentable over Japanese Patent Appl. Publ. No. 09-097876A (Honna) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,100,173 to Gardener et al. Claims 7 and 8 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By this Amendment, claim 1 has been amended to include the features formerly recited in claim 7 which is now canceled. Claim 8 which formerly depended from claim 7 (now canceled) has been amended to depend from claim 1.

Since claim 1 now includes all of the features formerly included in claim 7, claim 1 is believed to be allowable for at least the very same reasons that claim 7 would have been allowable after amendment into independent form.

Regarding claims 2-6 and 8, Applicant respectfully points out that claims 2-6 and 8 depend on and include all of the features of claim 1. Thus, claims 2-6 and 8 are patentable at least for the reasons that claim 1 is allowable.


Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, are now allowable over the cited art.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that may be required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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